

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 2 are pending. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended to even more clearly distinguish over the applied reference. Support for the amendment to claim 1 can be found in the original specification at, for example, Fig. 5 and its description at page 34, line 16 - page 37, line 9. For example, referring to Fig. 5, the heat generator 504 is provided on surfaces of the furnace (see, for example, page 34, lines 21-23) so as to surround the synthetic silica glass in the first position. Thus, no new matter is added by the above amendments.

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) or under §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,087,283 to Jinbo et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Jinbo et al. does not disclose or suggest the claim 1 thermal treatment apparatus in which a heat generator is provided on a surface of the furnace so as to surround the synthetic silica glass when it is located in the first position (inside the furnace). The apparatus shown in Fig. 10 of Jinbo et al. is analogous to the apparatus shown in Applicants' Fig. 4. The Jinbo apparatus in Fig. 10 is an apparatus used to produce a silica glass ingot; it is not a thermal treatment apparatus. Moreover, the apparatus shown in Fig. 10 of Jinbo et al. has a burner 406 that extends through the upper wall of the furnace, rather than a heat generator provided on a surface of the furnace so as to surround the synthetic silica glass in the first position, as recited in Applicants' claim 1. The claimed thermal treatment apparatus is capable of homogenizing the distribution of birefringence values of the synthetic silica glass due to the arrangement of the heat generator. The burner 406 of Jinbo et al. does not perform such a function because it is not a heat generator provided on a surface of the furnace so as to surround the synthetic silica glass when it is in the first position (inside the furnace).

Accordingly, claims 1 and 2 are patentable over Jinbo et al. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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